
WITHIN THE BUSINESS WORDS AND THEIR DENOTATIVE MEANINGS

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Abstract:

Our ideas must be conveyed in a strategic manner by catching the attention of the listeners. So, words become very important and their power is enhanced by their denotation and connotation. Denotation or the explicit meaning, the dictionary definition helps for a better understanding of words which have to be chosen carefully for what they imply or suggest. In the business area we must be very precise in the explanation in a dynamic, positive and action oriented language.

Keywords: *communication, word, language, information, success*

Words have different meanings to different people even when we use the same language. This is because of the way we understand information and therefore they have a descriptive meaning or what we call denotation and a non descriptive meaning or what is known as connotation. In other words, first is known as the literal, dictionary meaning and the second the emotional impact on us.

Denotation refers to the direct relationship between term and the object, idea, action it designates. It refers to the meaning of the word in relation to everyday life and to other words. It is difficult to argue against the denotation of a word, as the meaning is standard and the dictionary helps us. They are connected to selling, buying, money, import, export, employment, contracts, company structure, presentation, meetings, advertisements, negotiation...

The language in business is not complex. It is a plain language that must keep the message simple not simplistic, structuring information to be understood from the beginning. In this plain language we can communicate the benefits of our products and services by using simple terms. The goal would be not to impress with fancy words but to make clear what a certain company does for example. It is embarrassing when one must explain twice: it is waste of time and we may miss out the sales as far as people do not buy what they do not understand. This language is imperative when you run a business, write a procedure, manage a department, train workers...

We use words and phrases in our daily business life that can add positive power and in this way we gain success or on the contrary they can add negative power and thus we have no longer success in view. This might happen in marketing where they make the difference in the degree of impact from what we call marketing communication. We can use words to increase the power of our marketing such as: results, breakthrough, you, here, facts, discover, easy, yes, money, guaranteed, proven, new, free, winning, ...

Others might make people lose interest: obligation, bad, sell, difficult, wrong, deal, hard, cost, fail, worry, pay....

It is true that there are situations when we cannot eliminate the word but we must be aware not to use it needlessly. Vocabulary can be a business solution if we value the words. If serious about the career, about advancing, getting promoted, one must work on vocabulary and communication as a wise investment of time. To be confident by using business words, you must practice this in conversation. Thus, there will be no longer embarrassing situations but successful outcomes.

Some words that sell and which increase marketing effectiveness:

free – everybody wants something for nothing. Consider advertisements suggesting: free car, free holiday; we immediately think about the ownership element and what that means to us personally.

discover – everybody wants to know more about everything; when "discovering" information, this can be powerful and create a focus connected to the value of the information that you have just found, it opens our imagination.

Imagine – it arouses the subconscious and creates magical pictures. Some prospects will daydream and this can be helpful. Our first objective is to get our prospects using the products and service.

money – it will always catch people's attention, most of us want to save money on a purchase.

love – it conjures both personal and business feeling. Connecting love with a business proposal is powerful regarding involvement.

The business vocabulary contains words for different areas: management, finance, banking, insurance, marketing, advertising, trade, tourism... The most useful business English vocabulary includes the following words:

advertising – show your products to customers through radio, television or newspapers. "What is the best way for us to advertise our product?"

afford – able to buy, have enough money to buy. "Television is the best advertising, but the most expensive. Can we afford it?"

agenda – a detailed plan for a meeting. "The first item on our agenda is advertising."

booming – business is growing very fast. "This year business is booming, so we can start thinking about increasing our investments."

borrow – getting money from someone else, or from a bank, which we must pay back later. "We need to borrow \$100,000 to expand our business."

brand – the name of a well-known product (McDonald's, Coca Cola, Volkswagen, etc.). "We'll need to borrow money for advertising, then we'll build our brand awareness."

break even – when our spending equals the amount we receive from sales. "The company didn't make money nor lose money during the last quarter. They just broke even."

bribe – secretly paying money to get special favors from a company or government official. "She was sent to prison for 30 years for trying to bribe a high official."

budget – a detailed plan for spending money. "The second item on our agenda is the budget. We need to pay special attention to advertising, marketing and building our sales staff. Oh, and we need to significantly increase our budget for English teachers!"

calculate – to count, add, subtract, multiply, divide numbers. "It's not hard to calculate - if we keep spending more money than we take in, we'll have to sell more!"

cancel – to decide NOT to buy something that you had agreed to before. "Before they cancel the order, find out what the problem is and fix it!"

capital – money "If we had more capital to invest, we would build a new factory."

charge for – ask money for payment. "We never charge for repairs. Making sure our products work is included in the purchase price."

CEO – the top officer in a company, the chief executive officer. "How can we find a good CEO who knows how to run a business in today's business environment?"

CFO – the top financial officer in a company. "The CFO will be attending today's meeting to talk about fundamental accounting principles."

commission – a percentage of each sale that goes directly to the salesperson. "Our salespeople get 10% for each item sold, but that increases as he or she sells more."

competition – other companies that make the same product as yours. "We face tough competition, but our product has some important advantages."

consumption – the total amount of product bought in a market. "Although prices have fallen, overall consumption is higher, so we can still make money."

credit – when you buy first, but pay later. "You can buy this product on credit. The payment will be due in 90 days."

currency – the money of one country. "If you exchange currency in the airport, you'll pay a large commission. Go to a bank instead."

deadline – the time by which some project must be finished. "We have to finish this by Friday. That's the final deadline."

demand – the wish of customers to buy a product. "Until demand increases, we won't sell many of our most expensive products."

discount – a lower price. "If you buy more than 100 of these, we will give you a 10% discount".

distribution – getting the product to the final consumer, or customer. "Our distribution system needs to be improved if we are to meet increased demand."

diversify – start many new businesses instead of doing just one. "If we diversify, we can make more money, but sales of our main product may go down."

economics – the study of finance and money. "If you want to succeed in business, you should study economics."

employee – a worker. "Employees today need to learn so much to be able to move up in the company."

employer – the person who finds and pays workers. "My employer told me I have to work overtime or I'll lose my job!"

estimate – a guess about how much something will cost. "We estimate the new factory will cost less than 20 million euros."

export – to send goods out of a country. "As the local currency drops in value, our exports to that country also drop."

extend – to give more, especially a loan of money. "The bank said they cannot extend the deadline. We have to pay by Friday or face the consequences."

finance – the study of money and how to use money well. "After you study finance, you will know how to increase profits and limit losses."

fund – to provide money in general. "The CFO said the company plans to fund 50% of the project. The rest will come from the government."

gross – amount of money received from sales. "We took in more than \$100 million in gross sales last year."

import – to bring goods into a country. "When our currency is strong, we can import more goods into our own country."

incentive – a special price to get customers to buy. "By offering a 15% discount as an incentive, we'll attract many new customers."

income tax – money paid to the government, based on total money received. "I thought I made enough money last year, but after paying 25% income tax, I didn't have enough to buy that new house."

inflation – rising prices. "Rising energy prices have caused many other prices to increase. The rate of inflation has increased to 7%."

install – to put in and prepare for use, as with a machine. "If you buy now, we'll install this machine for free."

interest – extra money needed to pay back borrowed money. "When you pay back the 100,000 euros, you must also pay 10% interest, so the total will be 110,000 euros."

inventory – unsold items that you keep so that you can sell them in the future. "Our inventory is very low right now. We have to increase build up our inventory to meet demand in the coming year."

invest – spending money so that we can make more in the future. "If we invest so much money in a new factory, we won't have any money in our budget for new advertising."

invoice – a paper which explains what was sold and at what prices. "Look at the invoice. You charged us for repairs that you said were free!"

leadership – the skill of managing people. "He has natural leadership skills, so he will surely be successful."

lend – giving money to someone else, which they will pay back to us later. "When did you lend him the money? I lent it to him two months ago."

loss – when we spend more money than we receive from selling our product. "We took a loss last year, but this year we are spending less and selling more."

lucrative – the possibility of making a great amount of money. "This could be a very lucrative contract! We'll make money for each sale as well as for each installation!"

maintain – keep a machine in good condition. "If you maintain this product, it will last for years."

management – the study of how to run a business and lead people. "I plan to study management before I open my own business."

memo – a paper with a message, sent to other people in the same company. "The CFO read the CEO's memo at the meeting, to remind the employees of the company's strategic goals."

monopoly – when only one company controls a whole market. "With this new product, we can break our competitor's monopoly."

negotiate – try to get a better price or make a better arrangement. "We negotiated for hours before they finally gave us a 20% discount."

net – the amount of money received from sales, after expenses are subtracted. "Our gross sales were very good, but we need to cut expenses to add to our net sales."

principal – the main part of a loan, before interest is added. "We can pay back the principal in 10 years, then we will only have to repay the interest."

process (verb) – get something ready. "Please process his employment application, then send him to the accounting office."

profit – the money left over after all expenses are paid. "Our profits are lower this year, but at least we're not losing money!"

quarter – three months of the year, the usual time for planning and reporting financial reports. "Last quarter was our best ever, and I am confident next quarter will be even better."

recruit – search for and choose workers. "We'll need to recruit new employees before the factory starts operation."

refund – giving money back to the customer if there is a problem with the item you sell. "We cannot give you a refund after 90 days. Sorry!"

resign – quit a job suddenly. "Nobody knows why the CFO quit, but some people say he didn't get along with the CEO."

retail – selling to the final customer. "The retail price is 150 euros, but you can buy it for less if you bargain."

retire – finish work after a long career (at age 65 in the U.S., 60 in Japan, 55 in China...). "I've saved enough money for my retirement, but if I want to retire to Hawaii, I have to save even more!"

sales tax – money paid to the government, based on sales made. "In most states in the U.S., sales tax is added on after the sale. It varies from state to state."

salary – a monthly or yearly pay to managers of important workers. "We will have a salary increase of 7% this year, just enough to keep up with inflation."

saturated – too many companies producing the same product. "The market for product A is already saturated. We need to diversify if we wish to increase our profits."

sluggish – when business is slow (opposite of "booming"). "In this sluggish economy, the best we can hope for is to break even."

supply – the total amount of a product available in a market. "The supply of computer parts is too high, so the price is falling fast."

target – the amount that you plan to sell in a month (also "quota"). "The salesman reached his target by the 24th. He'll get a larger commission on any sales after that."

tariff – a tax on imports from another country. "If the government puts a tariff on electronic products, sales will fall."

terms – the details of an agreement or contract. "The terms of this contract are quite good. I think we have a deal!"

trend – movement in one direction, especially about product becoming more and more popular. "The trend towards more colorful fashion is getting stronger. We need to develop new products."

unit cost – the average amount needed to produce a product. "If we can produce more of these, our unit price will fall, and we'll be able to make a better profit."

warranty – a promise that the things you sell will be of good quality. "This product has a one-year warranty, but if you pay a small fee, we can extend it to five years."

wholesale – selling to a salesman who will then sell to the final customer. "The wholesale price is generally 50% of the retail price."

Some words might be considered dangerous in business English such as:

Just – This is used to make a huge request or error seem trivial as in: "Could you just do this (500 page) document by Monday?", a request best made late on a Friday afternoon.

But – "That was a great presentation, but...", or "I would like to help, but..."

From – Much loved by advertisers, as in "Fly to Rome from £10" excluding £100 of taxes and other "optional" extras for a flight leaving at 4am, going to an airport about 100km away from Rome and the ticket has to be booked one year in advance.

Might (and any other conditional verb) - Might is used to achieve two things: first it sets up a negotiating position as in, "I might be able to do that if..." Second, it lays the ground work for excusing failure later on: "I would have done it, if only..."

Only – Closely related to "Just", it is an attempt to make a big request or problem seem small. "It was only a small error....we only dropped one nuclear bomb over London..."

Important (and urgent) – Used to puff up any presentation: "This important new product/initiative...". Important to who? And why? Maybe it is important to the speaker, but why is it to me?

Thank you – Normally "Thank you" is good, except when used by automated voices at call centers saying, "Thank you for calling, we value your call...(and we have so much contempt for our customers that we can not be bothered to answer your call promptly, so we will put you on hold until you give up and try to use our impenetrable and useless online help instead)."

Interesting – Fear this word. When your lawyer uses it, you are doomed. When your doctor uses it, check your will is up to date. The recession is certainly interesting. A slightly less interesting time would be preferable.

Opportunity – Because the word “problem” has been banned in business speak, all problems have become opportunities. This means many opportunities are problems. There is a limit to how many opportunities I can solve. Interesting and strategic opportunities really scare me.

Conclusions: The English language is loaded with words and phrases. In business life we must use those words that make sense, that help in professional situations, that have impact in careers, and in job prospects... It is advisable when we choose a word to consider both its denotation (does it mean what you mean?) and connotation, as far as in some area (advertising) the latter is very important. Otherwise, the work with the dictionary is necessary for everybody who is interested in business English.

We use our communication skills to identify what makes you attractive to the market and then we make sure the public knows about this, we are committed to get the best results.

The world of business found in the real life is a limited one made up of business people, companies, institutions, business events, places of business, time, ways of communication and vocabulary concerned with technology.

The language in business is positive, dynamic, action orientated non emotive. Words make sense, express ideas in the clearest way.

It is important to:

- use familiar words of every day use to make the message readable and understandable;
- use concrete words not abstract;
- avoid long sentences;
- use strong and powerful words which arouse the interest of the reader

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